

**TESTIMONY OF AFRICAN CARIBBEAN AMERICAN PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH  
DISABILITIES, INC. (AFCAMP ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN) BEFORE THE JUDICIARY  
COMMITTEE CONCERNING SENATE BILL 387, AN ACT CONCERNING THE  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**MARCH 14, 2022**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking and other members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Ann Smith, Executive Director of AFCAMP Advocacy for Children, a parent-driven nonprofit celebrating 20 years of *“Empowering Families and Engaging Systems to Improve Children’s Lives.”*

My testimony today is in support of Senate Bill 387 and in general opposition of Raised Bills 5418, 365, 5417 and 386.

AFCAMP continues to advocate for needed reforms in Connecticut’s juvenile justice, education, and children’s mental health systems. Although these are separate systems, there is interplay between the impacts that they have on children and families. Many of those impacts produce disparate outcomes for children of color and children with special needs. Those impacts have only been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Senate Bill 387 adopts multiple recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee (JJPOC) that further efforts to address some of those interrelated and inequitable outcomes. AFCAMP is supportive of the overall goals of those Senate Bill 387 provisions that flow from the work of various JJPOC workgroups. I will focus my comments on recommendations of the JJPOC concerning the Community Expertise Workgroup and the Education Workgroup.

AFCAMP participates on the JJPOC Community Expertise Workgroup. The CEW workgroup is an effort to bring the perspectives of individuals receiving services from, or impacted by, the juvenile justice and education systems, into the decision-making processes within those systems. The most recent JJPOC CEW recommendation included the appointment of two (2) parent representatives and two (2) youth representatives as voting members of the JJPOC. This is the second year that the JJPOC has recommended giving these critical voices a vote. AFCAMP supports the inclusion of the CEW voting provision in SB 387. In addition, we would encourage support for active participation on the JJPOC by youth and parents through stipends for transportation, childcare and the expertise that they contribute.

With regard to the interplay between the juvenile justice and education systems, there are two (2) important recommendations of the JJPOC Education Workgroup that are missing from SB 387, namely those that address suspension and expulsion and the collection of 911 data.

AFCAMP is involved with a number of boards and committees addressing the juvenile justice, education, and mental health systems in Connecticut. We are committed to working with systems and the legislature toward improving children’s lives.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann R. Smith, JD, MBA  
Executive Director